# TWO PORTRAITS

BY

# FRANS HALS

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*BY*

# FRANS HALS

*formerly in the collection of*

KING STANISLAUS II OF POLAND

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*formerly in the collection of*

STANISLAUS AUGUSTUS PONIATOWSKY

Last King of Poland, under the Title of

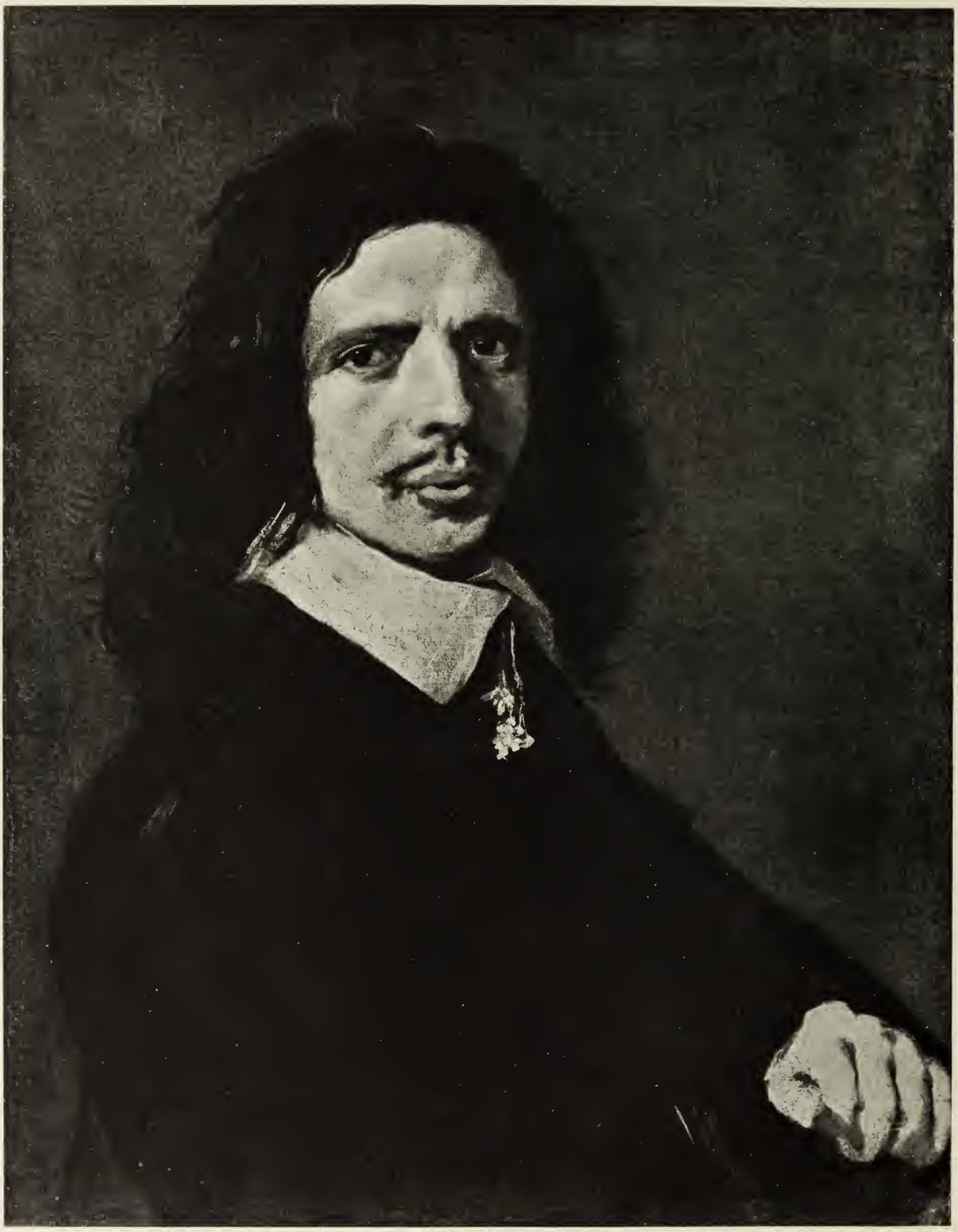
STANISLAUS II

(Reigned 1764-1796)

*Recently Purchased from the Heirs of his Morganatic Wife*

THE COUNTESS GRABOWSKI

From Her Castle of Swyssosk, Russia



# FRANS HALS

FRANS HALS ranks with Rembrandt as one of the greatest painters of all times, and the profound influence of these two men, who were heads of the two principal schools of Holland, Haarlem and Amsterdam, dominated the Art of their country. Hals was born at Mecheln in Flanders about 1580, and emigrated to Haarlem before 1591, where he passed most of his life. He is the portrait painter of Holland par excellence, and his portraits are the epitome of Dutch life of his day.

As a painter Frans Hals has never been surpassed. His brush work is brilliant and sure, and he excels especially in the juxtaposition of color and its subordination to the prevailing tone, in the rendition of values, and subtle treatment of light and atmosphere.

As the great French critic Fromentin, himself an important painter, so trenchantly wrote in 1876: "Never was there better painting, never will there be better painting."

Hals' life-work is divided into various periods, and of these the latest development is the most highly prized by collectors and connoisseurs. During this period of the Master's work, he portrayed his sitters with an inward vision and a spiritual content which were lacking in his younger days. He became freer and richer in pictorial expression and increasingly simple in color. Using almost exclusively blacks, whites and grays, he developed a richness and beauty of tone which has never been surpassed. Collectors of cultivated taste at the present time, therefore, seek to acquire an example of this period, which reveals the Master's last and greatest artistic fruition. Unfortunately, such works are seldom available, and it is most rare to find companion-pieces, which after all must be enjoyed together in order to grasp the full significance of the artist's conception.

It was quite customary for husband and wife to have themselves portrayed in companion-pieces for their home. Such pieces are preserved in several great Museums, which acquired them long ago; but they are naturally much rarer in private collections, since the pair were usually separated in the vicissitudes which befell them. It is therefore, necessary to search in widely separated places for portraits which originally belonged together. This is the more regrettable, as Hals treated these pairs of portraits as a complete entity, and however beautiful in itself a single piece may be, the pair must be seen together in order to obtain the full artistic enjoyment.

It was therefore an event in the world of Art when there appeared, from the collection of a family of oldest Polish nobility, two portraits of a married couple heretofore unknown and examples of Hals' latest and best period. Rarely has the judgment of all the great experts been so unanimous as in this case. Bode, Valentiner, Friedlaender, Hofstede de Groot and Bredius enthusiastically acclaimed these portraits as equal in artistic value to Hals' most famous achievements.

In these portraits Frans Hals has penetrated to the very depths of the human soul. It is not only their external appearance, the individual as man and woman, which he places before us with masterly characterization as though they were alive; he reveals also their inner selves, their very souls to us. And how delicately, with all the breadth and freedom of his brush work, he places his color, so that every stroke expresses exactly what he wishes to convey. To mention a single detail, how marvelously has he painted the pearls enmeshed in their own soft glimmer. He has here equalled the unapproached achievement of Jan Vermeer van Delft in the wonderful "Head of a Woman" in the Museum of the Hague.

Before such achievement words fail and the eye alone can grasp the fullness of beauty.

# DESCRIPTION OF THE PAINTINGS

## PORTRAIT OF A MAN

Height, 25⅝; Width 19⅜ inches

The head and bust alone visible. The shoulders in profile. The head turned half right, facing the spectator. Wearing a loose black coat or gown of light material, void of decoration, with simple linen collar of medium width, fastened at the neck with two tassels. The arms are folded low across the chest, the right hand hidden, the left loosely clenched, showing a thin black ring on the fourth finger. An abundance of rich black hair frames the face, falling unconstrained over the collar and left shoulder. The piercing eyes, half in shadow from the knit brows, are tinged with melancholy. Thin black moustaches throw into relief the rich carmine of the mobile lips.

A sombre harmony in black and gray, the high-lights in the flesh of a creamy hue, thin shadows tinged with red. The body is loosely brushed in with a few sweeping strokes of fluid black, the forms of the head built as it were outwards, on high-light, with consummate ease and freedom. The whole seen against a background of luminous brown, thinly painted.

Oil on canvas. Signed at lower right with the monogram.

## PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN

Height, 25⅝; Width 19⅜ inches

Head and bust only. The shoulders in profile. The head turned half left, facing the spectator. Wearing a black dress, slashed at the bodice, with broad linen collar and cuff, trimmed with lace, and muslin cap. The severity of the costume is relieved only by a strip of gold braid at the corsage, a gold pin in the hair, a pearl pin in the cap, and

two pearls that hang from the ears. Even the thin hair is banished, being brushed straight back from the domed forehead to be caught beneath the cap and there held hidden. In contrast, the face is of great gentleness, the eyes a little wistful, the mouth young and beautifully formed.

Black and gray, tinged with red. A harmony in the same tones as its companion. The two portraits swing together in a single circular rhythm.

Oil on canvas. Signed at lower left with the monogram.

## HISTORY OF THE PAINTINGS

These two portraits formed part of the collection of Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowsky, last King of Poland, 1764-1796, who was known as a great lover and patron of the Arts.

They later came into the possession of his morganatic wife, the Countess Grabowski, in whose family they remained over one hundred years in the castle Swyssosk in Russia, near the Polish frontier.

# AUTHENTICATIONS

## DR. WILHELM VON BODE

*Director of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin*

### PORTRAIT OF A MAN

The Portrait of a Man, reproduced on this photograph, I consider an excellent and most characteristic work by Frans Hals the Elder, from his later period, about 1655-60, signed at lower left with the genuine monogram F. H. It is as individual in its conception as it is masterly in its execution. The fact that its companion-piece, the portrait of the wife, has also been preserved, is of especial interest. The relation of the two portraits has been handled in the happiest manner. The portrait is in excellent preservation.

(Signed) W. Bode

### PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN

The Portrait of a Woman, reproduced on this photograph, I consider a masterpiece by Frans Hals, from his later period, about 1655-60. It possesses the highest qualities of this best period of the great artist, and is at the same time of unusual intimacy of conception. It bears at lower right the genuine monogram. The picture is in excellent preservation.

(Signed) W. Bode

## DR. W. R. VALENTINER

*Director of the Detroit Institute of Arts*

The painting reproduced on this photograph (on canvas, 65 x 49 cm.) and the companion-piece, are in my opinion two excellent original paintings by Frans Hals the Elder, painted about 1655-60. Both pictures are executed with the remarkable freedom of technique, the black and gray tones, and the atmospheric treatment characteristic of this last great period of the artist; they combine with the sureness of execution an extraordinary vividness of expression. Both paintings are signed with the monogram of the artist and are in a good state of preservation.

They will be reproduced in the next edition of my book on Frans Hals (Klassiker der Kunst).

(Signed) W. R. Valentiner

London, June, 1926

## CORNELIUS HOFSTEDE DE GROOT

### PORTRAIT OF A MAN

The undersigned has carefully examined a picture painted on canvas, height 25 5/8, width 19 3/8 inches (65 x 49 cm.,) representing the life size, half-length portrait of a gentleman, turned to the right, but looking at the spectator; the only visible, left hand clasped before the body. In a plain black dress and collar with two tassels. Long and rich black hair, black eyes and small black moustache. The undersigned considers this picture as an authentic, characteristic, authentically signed (with monogram above the hand) work of the last and best period of Frans Hals.

(Signed) Corn. Hofstede de Groot

The Hague, July, 1926

### PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN

The undersigned has carefully examined a picture painted on canvas, height 25 5/8, width 19 3/8 inches (65 x 49 cm.,) representing the life size, half-length portrait of a lady, turned to the left, but looking at the spectator; the left hand (only visible one) before the breast. In a plain large collar with a border of lace and similar cuff, black dress with gilt buttons. A pearl on the white bonnet, others at the earrings. A small golden ornament on the left side of the face. The undersigned considers this picture as an authentic, characteristic, authentically signed (with monogram in the left-hand corner) work of the last and best period of Frans Hals.

(Signed) Corn. Hofstede de Groot

The Hague, July, 1926

## DR. MAX I. FRIEDLAENDER

*Director of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin*

The Portrait of a Man, reproduced on the other side of this photograph, as well as its companion piece, the Portrait of a Woman, are magnificent creations of Frans Hals, from the period of his greatest maturity and freedom.

(Signed) Friedlaender

DR. A. BREDIUS

Dear Friend:—

Will only say quickly that I find the two Frans Hals portraits very important and very beautiful. They are of his very latest period when he was at his height; how extraordinary for a man of eighty!

I envy the happy owner!

Ever Yours,

A. Bredius

The pictures are in excellent condition with fine old craquelure.

# COPIES OF ORIGINAL AUTHENTICATIONS

Das vorstehend abgebildete männliche Bildniss, das rechtsunten mit dem echten Monogramm (F1) bezeichnet ist, ~~ist~~ halte ich für ein trefflicher, charakteristischer Werk der späteren Zeit des älteren Frans Hals (um 1655–1660). Es ist ebenso individuell aufgefaßt wie malerisch meisterhaft ausgeführt. Besonders interessant ist noch der Umstand daß das Gegenstück, das Porträt der Gattin, noch erhalten ist, und dass die Stellung der beiden Porträts in der geschicktesten Weise angeordnet ist. Die Erhaltung ist vorzüglich.

W. Bode

Das vorstehend abgebildete Porträt halte ich für ein Meisterwerk des Frans Hals aus seiner späteren Zeit (um 1655–1660). Es hat die höchsten malerischen Qualitäten dieser besten Zeit des grossen Künstlers und ist dabei zugleich von einer ungewöhnlichen Intimität der Auffassung. Es trägt links unten das echte Monogramm des Künstlers. Das Bild ist von trefflicher Erhaltung.

Wd Bode

# COPIES OF ORIGINAL AUTHENTICATIONS

The painting reproduced in this photograph (on canvas h. 65 w. 49 cent.) and the companion-piece are in my opinion two excellent original paintings by Frans Hals the elder, painted about 1655 – 60. Both pictures are executed with the remarkable freedom of technic, the black and gray tones, and the atmospheric treatment characteristic for this late great period of the artist; they combine with the sureness of execution an extraordinary vividness of expression. Both paintings are signed with the monogram of the artist and are in a good state of preservation. They will be reproduced in the next edition of my book on Frans Hals (Klassiker der Kunst).

London, June 26. 1926

W. R. Valentiner

Das umstehend photographierte Männerporträt sowie das Gegenstück dazu, das Bildnis einer Frau, sind ausgezeichnete Schöpfungen von Frans Hals aus der Zeit seiner höchsten Reife und Freiheit.

Max J. Friedländer

Berlin, d. 6. Okt. 1926.

# COPIES OF ORIGINAL AUTHENTICATIONS

July 1926
LANGE VOORHOUT 94
's Gravenhage.

(Nr. 3309)
Telegram-Adres
HOFSTEDEDEGROOT
's GRAVENHAGE
Telephoon 10759.

The undersigned has carefully examined a picture, painted on ~~wood~~, canvas, ~~copper~~, high 25 3/8, wide 19 3/8 inches, (65 × 49 c.M.), representing the life size, half length portrait of a gentleman, turned to the right, but looking at the spectator; the only visible left hand clasped before the body. In a plain black dress + collar with two tassels. Long + rich black hair, black eyes + small black moustache. The undersigned considers this picture as an authentic, characteristic, authentically signed (with monogram above the hand) work of the last + best period of Frans Hals

C. Hofstede de Groot
1926

July 1926
LANGE VOORHOUT 94
's Gravenhage.

(Nr. 3310)
Telegram-Adres
HOFSTEDEDEGROOT
's GRAVENHAGE
Telephoon 10759.

The undersigned has carefully examined a picture, painted on ~~wood~~, canvas, ~~copper~~, high 25 3/8, wide 19 3/8 inches, (65 × 49 c.M.), representing the life size, half length portrait of a lady, turned to the left, but looking at the spectator; the left hand (only visible one) before the breast. In a plain, large collar with a small border of lace + similar cuff; black dress with gilt buttons. A pearl on the white bonnet, others at the ear rings. A small golden ornament on the left side of the face. The undersigned considers this picture as an authentic, characteristic, authentically signed (with monogram in the left bottom corner) work of the last + best period of Frans Hals

C. Hofstede de Groot
1926

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